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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,
MARCH 28, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 28, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Sabah: It is estimated that there are 3,000 PKK/KADEK militants at "Mahmur Camp" in northern Iraq just south of the 36th parallel. The PKK authorities have been sending messages recently through Kurdish groups in northern Iraq to the US so that the coalition forces would not bomb them. The PKK claims the presence of many civilians in the camp. It is believed that Celal Talabani and Mesut Barzani are conveying the PKK's message to US forces. The PKK fears meeting the same fate as the al-Qaida-affiliated Al-Ansar organization that has been bombed by the US in Halabja. Sources in Washington have reported that the US has just started thinking about what to do about the camps like "Mahmur." The "Kurdish Summit" in Ankara being chaired by President Bush's special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, agreed upon ending the terrorist activities of all terrorist groups in the region. An anonymous US official said Washington accepted PKK/KADEK as a terrorist organization but so far US military forces have only bombed Al-Ansar and Komala camps in Halabja. What will happen to the PKK camps is going to become a serious examination for Turkey-US relations. The US has three options, according to reports.

- (1) To bomb the PKK/KADEK camp, given that the organization is officially recognized as a terrorist organization by Department of State.
- (2) To disarm the militants in the camp and surrender them to Turkish authorities who could grant them an amnesty.
- (3) To not touch the PKK/KADEK.

3. Milliyet: The US troops deployed at Mardin's Industrial Zone were put on alert when they received a suicide car bomb threat. The soldiers have been reinforcing security at the base. The soldiers scan the base perimeter with projectors and use night-vision binoculars. Soldiers pointed their guns at a DHA (Dogan News Agency) reporter who wanted to take pictures; the stand-off was ended after a US military officer checked the journalist ID card.

4. Bolge: KESK (Public Employees Unions Confederation) and Adana Chapter Platform members held an anti-war protest meeting at Ugur Mumcu Square by the Railway Station in Adana. KESK affiliates also marched past the Consulate, shouting slogans, e.g. "Murderer America, Get Out of Turkey."

5. Evrensel: An anti-war demonstration drew participation of 100 people in Adiyaman. The participants shouted slogans such as "Damn US Imperialism," "Budget not for war but education," and "US the murderer, AKP the collaborator." In the southeast, smaller but similar demonstrations took place in Tunceli, Malatya, Elazig, and Mersin, as well. Milliyet: In addition to two Dutch Patriot Missile Batteries at the 2nd Tactical Air Base in Diyarbakir, two US Patriot Missile Batteries and 200 soldiers arrived yesterday. It is anticipated that one of the batteries will be deployed in Mardin, where the US has established a logistical support center.

16. Cumhuriyet: Because Turkey announced refugee-flow would be a reason for a Turkish incursion in northern Iraq, Kurdish groups there have decided to send refugees to Iran and Syria instead, if unable to cope with refugees internally.

17. Radikal: Because it is anticipated that the Iraqi government would cut the electricity supplied from Baghdad to Zakho, a team of eight electricians was dispatched from Batman to northern Iraq to assess the situation. Officials announced that they were waiting for instructions from the Ministry of Energy for providing electricity.

18. Milliyet: It is reported that the Coordinating Governor of Diyarbakir, Nusret Miroglu, has in hand "a blank check" to cope with any refugee problems that might erupt. It is reported that some 3,000 refugees would be able to go to European countries, via a procedure, which Turkey would arrange, by land and air and sea, primarily to Belgium, France, Holland, and Denmark.

19. Radikal/Hurriyet/Cumhuriyet: The European Commission announced it is interested in the retrials at the Ankara State Security Court (SSC) of (now-defunct) DEP party former Turkish parliamentary deputies Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Dogan, and Selim Sadak. The Commission's announcement said the cases would be followed very closely and reiterated the importance it attaches to "freedom of expression and association" and its application in practice in Turkey.

110. Milliyet: With regard to the DEP deputies trial, it is reported that 17 members of the Babat clan, who had previously given testimony against the former deputies, had decided not to appear in court, despite summons sent by the SSC. The witnesses reportedly stated that they could make their statements via letters rogatory, but the European Human Rights Court had instructed the SSC that presence of the witnesses was required.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

111. Milliyet/Turkiye: The Hungarian Ambassador to Turkey, Zsolt Szalay, has been visiting the Cukurova Region to evaluate its economic potential for promoting economic ties. The Ambassador visited Adana's Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, Commodities Exchange, Governorate, and Organized Industrial Zone. He announced that a large Hungarian Trade Delegation would hold a meeting in Istanbul on May 15 to focus on how to increase trade volume between the two countries.

112. Turkiye/Milli Gazete: TEK, the Turkish Electricity Distribution Company, sued 5 township and 8 district municipalities in Malatya province for not paying electric bills in the amount of USD one million. TEK is demanding confiscation of the assets of the municipalities.

113. Bolge: Thanks to efforts by Adana AKP Provincial Chairman and eight deputies from the region, crop dusters that had been banned from flying, due to the war on Iraq, have now been granted permission to fly again, for the purpose of dusting wheat fields with pesticides.

HOLTZ